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[classified]

Memorandum from the Acting Secretary of State (Ingersoll) to President Ford, Washington, February 18, 1975

Ingersoll updated Ford on efforts to combat terrorism and highlighted continuing concerns.

[State, CIA]

Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, P750037-0744. Secret. A copy was sent to S/CCT. Attachment 1 is not published. Attachment 2 is published as Document [~~November 6, 1974~~]. Attachment 3 is published as Document [~~February 5, 1975~~].

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 18, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROBERT S. INGERSOLL, ACTING SECRETARY

SUBJECT: Combatting Terrorism

In his September 25, 1972, memorandum establishing the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism, President Nixon requested periodic progress reports. There follows a resume of the work of the Committee since the report of June 27, 1973.

The Committee itself has been convened only at its installation. There has been no compelling reason to convene more frequently since its ten statutory Cabinet-level members are kept fully informed by its dynamic Working Group, which is in close contact as issues arise and incidents occur. The Working Group now includes as participants ten additional agencies which cooperate in seeking "the most effective means by which to prevent terrorism here and abroad," to use the language of the original mandate.

For working purposes, we consider terrorism as violent attacks or threats by politically motivated or mentally disturbed individuals or groups against innocent bystanders who fall under our protective responsibility. We are concerned primarily with protection of Americans at home and abroad and with foreign officials and dependents in this country. But since this is a global problem requiring international remedies, we as a government assume an international leadership role in pursuit of multilateral remedies. At the same time, the Committee watches violence in this country

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through the eyes of the FBI, the Department of Transportation, and other domestic agencies and is particularly alert to any domestic cases with international terrorist potential.

Individual departments and agencies continue to manage programs dealing with terrorism under their respective mandates. Therefore this paper will concentrate on the essentially coordinating role of the Cabinet Committee/Working Group, which ensures that these programs are fully dovetailed and that government-wide resources focusing on this problem are used to best advantage.

The emphasis remains on prevention and on diplomacy, but the Cabinet Committee/Working Group is also prepared to cope with emergencies. I am convinced that this bureaucratic innovation has, over the past two and a half years, reduced the risk to our people and is well worth continuing.

A. Continuing Programs at Home

You will have received reports through the traditional channels on the performance of individual departments in the counter-terrorism field. The following essentially domestic programs are however worth highlighting:

-- The Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration in cooperation with other agencies continue to strengthen the United States Civil Aviation Security Program now required of operators of US airports and US scheduled domestic and flag air carriers operating large aircraft. Mandatory screening of all passengers and their carry-on baggage, including foreign airports where permitted, and the US/Cuba bilateral agreement have effectively deterred hijacking of US aircraft from the United States. However, we are still vulnerable to hijackers at many foreign airports where proper screening is not permitted.

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Another serious gap lies in the fact that many foreign carriers entering the United States do not regularly screen their passengers, thus leaving US airports vulnerable to terrorist attacks. The Departments of Transportation and State are working to close these two security gaps.

-- The Department of State has created a new position of Security Coordinator, who will ensure that protection of foreign officials and installations is optimum. He will work closely with the Secret Service, the Executive Protective Service, and the Department of State as they provide supplemental protection to that which is furnished by local authorities.

-- The FBI is the primary source of intelligence on domestic violence and assumes primary responsibility should an act of terrorism occur involving foreign officials and installations and requiring a Federal response. Pursuant to an agreement with the Attorney General, the Department of Defense is providing assistance to the FBI in the form of equipment loans and security measures.

-- The Department of Justice monitors Public Law 92-539 which specifies Federal criminal offenses for various acts against foreign officials, thus supplementing legal protection customarily provided under local jurisdictions.

-- Visa, immigration, and customs procedures remain tight. A deeper screening of visa applicants of Arab origin has shown some useful results. Japanese applicants have been given special attention following the seizure of hostages in the French Embassy in Holland by Japanese Red Army terrorists.

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-- The Department of Treasury/ATF, with the cooperation of other Departments and agencies, continues to search for cost effective techniques to detect the presence of explosive materials, and to "tag" explosives for identification.

-- The FBI, the Secret Service, and the Department of State are training negotiators and other professionals for use in hostage situations.

-- All Departments concerned, including the Washington Metropolitan Police Department (which cooperates with the Working Group), are agreed on guidelines to be used in domestic incidents with international ramifications. (Attachment 2.) The Philippine Embassy incident of November saw an effective initiation of these guidelines, which have been refined since then.

-- The ERDA and Defense have tightened safeguards and security measures designed to forestall terrorist seizure of nuclear materials or attacks upon nuclear weapons storage, on the civilian and military sides respectively. Defense has established a Physical Security Review Board responsible for policy and standards pertaining not only to the protection of nuclear weapons but to DOD conventional arms, weapons, and explosives as well.

-- The Postal Service operates a well-tested surveillance for letter bombs and has developed good international connections.

B. International Efforts

We seek wherever possible to inspire the broadest multilateral consensus in responding firmly to international terrorists. Ideally, if governments will

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agree on arrest or extradition of such offenders, terrorists will find that the price for their crimes will be intolerable and they will desist. Unfortunately most countries do not show the firmness or political will which the US manifests in standing up to terrorist threats and in too many cases find reasons to permit the terrorist to get away and to strike another day. Nevertheless, there are hopeful signs -- such as new firmness of Mexico, Dominican Republic, Algeria, and even the PLO in some cases of international terrorism -- which gives us hope that common sense will eventually prevail and international terrorists will be restrained in the process. In any event, it is important that the US continue to set the best example and to show the right sort of leadership internationally in the face of this continuing challenge. Some areas of activity which we support:

-- Under the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), three international conventions have been adopted which provide for arrest or extradition of aerial saboteurs. Regrettably the Air Security Conference in Rome in the summer of 1973 was unable to agree on further sanctions against countries which violated this principle. The ICAO Council in Montreal, however, continues its quiet and good work in improving airport and airline technical security.

-- While we failed in 1972 to achieve agreement at the UN on a convention to outlaw the export of violence from one country to another, the General Assembly in December, 1973, adopted a Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. This Convention provides for, among other things, the prosecution or extradition of terrorists who strike at diplomats. The climate at the 1974 General Assembly was such that no profitable initiative in the terrorism field was feasible. We are therefore obliged to await a change in that climate before attempting new initiatives there.

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-- Over the years our delegates to INTERPOL have achieved what has been possible, in that essentially non-political organization, to track down terrorists.

-- Members of the Cabinet Committee/Working Group cooperate with the International Association of Chiefs of Police in a wide variety of counter-terrorist matters.

-- NATO has been hesitant to engage in combatting terrorism, largely because of divergences over Middle East policies, but the US has taken initiatives regularly to attempt to overcome this unrealistic reluctance.

-- The Department of State engages in steady bilateral diplomacy to supplement multilateral efforts to convince governments that they should stand together or they will hang separately. State also makes demarches to a wide variety of governments in cases where leniency toward terrorists can only foster new terrorism. We have, e.g., been firm with the Sudanese and Egyptians in the matter of the terrorists who killed our Ambassador and his Deputy in Khartoum in March, 1973.

-- CIA plays an important role in collecting and analyzing intelligence abroad and in maintaining appropriate liaison with friendly foreign services in this field. CIA and NSA are indispensable, as is FBI domestically, in intelligence support of task force operations.

-- The Department of Treasury/Customs in their daily working relationship continues to exchange information and review Customs techniques on a one-to-one basis with their foreign counterparts.

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-- The Department of Transportation/FAA have offered a variety of technical assistance to foreign governments to help improve their airport and airline security. The FAA school at Oklahoma City is but one opportunity for foreigners in this program.

-- LEAA funds anti-terrorist activities of other Federal agencies such as the FAA school in Oklahoma City and an FBI symposium on international terrorism.

-- AID's Office of Public Safety has accomplished a great deal of good over the years in the counter-terrorism field with its programs abroad and in this country for foreign police administrators. This Office was abolished by the last Congress.

-- Businessmen with overseas interests have been in mild panic in such areas as Latin America, where they are often terrorists' targets. State's Coordinator for Combatting Terrorism has made a special effort to share with such Americans techniques, intelligence, and counsel which can reduce the risk to these individuals.

-- Following the murder of our diplomats in the Sudan, Congress was asked for special funds for additional personnel and materials to better security at our diplomatic and consular posts. $19.6 million was appropriated and has been disbursed to the most needy posts.

-- The Department of State, in coordination with members of the Cabinet Committee/Working Group, has recently instructed all diplomatic and consular posts on management of hostage situations abroad. (Attachment 3.)

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C. Policy and Tactics

Our principal desire is to deter a terrorist from striking by placing legal, physical, or other barriers before him. Should he strike, we seek to apprehend him and ensure that he pays a sufficiently high penalty to discourage other potential terrorists.

In a hostage situation, our primary objective is to secure the safe return of the hostages. Collaterally we seek to apprehend the terrorist(s). This is easier said than done since in some instances we may be obliged to acquiesce to the terrorist's freedom in return for the safety of the hostages. In order to facilitate the decision-making in such instances, the Cabinet Committee/ Working Group have included in their operational guidelines probable demands of terrorists at home and abroad, various options with pros and cons, and certain recommended actions. The thorny problems of monetary ransom (the US has not paid ransom for release of its personnel), release of prisoners, and amnesty for terrorists are reviewed in those guidelines in the interest of facilitating the excruciating, and often life-and-death, decisions which must be made in hostage situations.

On the management side, all Departments and agencies have improved their task force and other procedures for emergency actions connected with kidnappings, hijackings, and other terrorist actions. These procedures are kept under continuing review and constitute yet another deterrent to terrorists. By prompt and effective management of hostage situations, we hopefully can overcome terrorists by one device or another.

Handling of publicity is an important element in any counter terrorism program. In a rescue operation, the task force commander sees to it that the media receive information which does not jeopardize his operation or further endanger the fragile security of the hostages. In the longer run, the various agencies in their public relations roles attempt to place the terrorist in his proper context -- terrorists are not heroes but rather criminals who strike at innocent bystanders. Political passion no matter how deeply held

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cannot be justification for killing innocents, and governments have a continuing and overriding obligation to safeguard the most fundamental right of all -- the right of life.

D. Continuing Concerns

I regret to report that the outlook is not bright for an early termination of representative incidents such as are listed in the attachment. Our primary concerns:

-- Terrorist groups and individuals of different nationalities are working more closely together, are moving farther and farther afield, including toward North America, and are generally amply financed by ransoms collected or by governments which for one reason or other are sympathetic toward certain terrorist groups.

-- As progress is made toward a political settlement in the Middle East, there remain so-called rejectionists who wish to sabotage that progress and to kill Arabs and others seeking a settlement. These rejectionists often receive encouragement if not support from Iraq and Libya.

-- While the PLO and its more moderate supporters have disavowed foreign terrorist operations except for Israel or Israelis, this does not preclude continuing raids in Israel, which in turn triggers sharp Israeli reaction in kind and further cycles of violence, particularly across the Israel-Lebanon frontier.

-- The Jewish Defense League has resumed an aggressive nation-wide campaign against Soviet installations and others (French, Indians) with potentially serious diplomatic consequences.

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-- Terrorists benefit from improved technology, including communications and weaponry. We have attempted to restrain the Soviets and the Syrians from making a portable surface-to-air missile (SA-7) available to Fedayeen groups who might allow this weapon to be diverted to use against civilian airliners as was the case in Rome in the winter of 1973.

-- In Latin America, where kidnapping is endemic, there have been epidemics of this extremism from time to time. Argentina gives us particular concern as our people are periodically targeted in the terrorist process. The recent kidnapping in Managua of members of the Nicaraguan establishment causes us to fear repetition of that atrocity even in countries where security is considered to be good. The anti-Castro FLNC has struck in this country and abroad at governments which are considering resumption of relations with Cuba.

-- Our vigilance has spared the US many of the atrocities which we see committed abroad, but international terrorist threats continue to aim at the US. The bombs in Manhattan during Mrs. Golda Meir's 1973 visit, the letter bomb at the British Embassy in August, 1973, and the murder of an Israeli Military Attache in July, 1973, were all believed to be of foreign origin and are dramatic reminders that international terrorists have already arrived. Moreover the Patty Hearst case and others contained an international potential and illustrated the possibility of domestic and foreign terrorist groups' collaborating operationally.

-- Last but not least, there seems to be no shortage of political, economic, and social frustrations to spawn terrorists on all continents.

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E. Priority Areas of Concentrated Effort

Appreciating as we do the importance of preventing terrorism as opposed to an after-the-event response, all agencies and Departments have concentrated on improving their intelligence and their standard operating procedures for dealing with this phenomenon. More specifically:

-- Research is given high priority. State and Defense have hired the RAND Corporation to prepare a Confidential study to advise on the optimum management of hostage situations. Four or five agencies, including LEAA, are collaborating in a study to determine where municipal and international law may permit additional legal deterrents against terrorists. We are examining the possible utility of independent research to ensure that all possible gaps are being filled with counter-measures against terrorists who may wish to employ nuclear or biological-chemical weapons. ERDA is accelerating its research effort to develop more advanced physical security systems for the protection of nuclear materials intransit and in plants. Bilateral technical discussions on nuclear materials protection have been held with France, the United Kingdom and Israel. Defense has engaged a firm of consultants to analyze the political dynamics of Palestinian terrorist movements.

-- The Working Group is giving increased priority attention to a more systematic utilization of behavioral science techniques.

-- Justice continues to monitor Federal and other legal protection of foreign officials to ensure that prosecution is vigorous and that terrorists are deterred by efficient law enforcement in pending cases.

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-- We remain gravely concerned over the gaps in the security screen surrounding foreign officials and installations in this country and have presented various recommendations to the White House calling for increased Federal resources to supplement, on a periodic basis, the traditional local protection accorded our foreign guests. Of particular concern is New York City, where it is imperative that we do something more and soon to assist the good work of the New York City Police, who have done remarkably well in such situations as the Arafat visit. Other communities also periodically deserve additional limited Federal assistance.

-- On the Hill, we continue to press for implementing legislation on the UN Convention for the Protection of Diplomats as well as for a similar convention adopted in the OAS.

-- The Treasury and Transportation Departments, with State participation, are attempting to devise a joint program which would mechanically examine both incoming and outgoing hold baggage.

-- FAA is considering regulations which would impose on foreign airlines serving this country the same restrictions on security of hand baggage and persons boarding their incoming and outgoing aircraft as prevail with domestic US airlines.

-- State is preparing a major revision of its task force procedures for dealing with overseas kidnappings of official and unofficial Americans.

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The challenge of international terrorism is still great and we have no choice but to meet it. Some countries lack the political will to face up to it and choose instead to transfer the problem to the international community. We set the opposite example -- firmness with terrorists while at the same time compassion for the hostages, a responsive system which removes legitimate grievances, collaboration with other nations to find the broadest international consensus to counter the continuing threat, and improvement of management and other techniques to outwit or to overcome the terrorist.

The Cabinet Committee/Working Group is unique among governments as a mechanism for coping with terrorism. There is no danger that the Committee/Group will rest on its several laurels. On the contrary, its membership is the first to admit that there remains much we can and should do to cope with this continuing problem. This report outlines the course which is charted for so doing.

Attachments:

1. Representative Incidents, July, 1973, to the Present
2. Guidelines for Dealing with Terrorism with International Ramifications
3. Revised Procedures for Responding to Acts of Terrorism Against Americans Abroad

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